

## Message Text

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13-11

ACTION EA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1435

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 1137

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ORIT, ELAB, RP

SUBJECT: DISSIDENT LABOR ACTIVITY: POSSIBLE JANUARY 25 MASS  
PROTEST RALLY

REF: MANILA 1019

BEGIN SUMMARY: LABOR SECRETARY OPLE HAS CHARACTERIZED ORGANIZERS OF POSSIBLE JANUARY 25 PROTEST DEMONSTRATION AS MILITANT COALITION OF DISSIDENT ELEMENTS, PREPONDERANTLY MARXIST, THOUGH DILUTED BY RELIGIOUS PARTICIPATION. NOTED MILITARY GETTING IMPATIENT WITH SUCH RADICAL GROUPS, AND HE HOPED MILITARY WOULDN'T OVERREACT TO ANY STRONG PROVOCATION. EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED REPORTS ALLEGING BUKLURAN LABOR GROUP CREATURE OF CPP/ML. WHETHER OR NOT DEMONSTRATION COMES OFF, DOES APPEAR THAT COMMUNIST ELEMENTS HAVE INDEED SUCCEEDED IN ENTICING NON-COMMUNIST LABOR AND CHURCH GROUPS INTO "UNITY OF ACTION" STANCE ON LABOR GRIEVANCES. END SUMMARY.

1. INCONVERSATION WITH LABATT JANUARY 22, LABOR SECRETARY BLAS OPLE SAID ORGANIZERS OF POSSIBLE JANUARY 25 MASS PROTEST RALLY WERE "WHOLE COALITION OF DISSIDENT ELEMENTS", OF WHICH BUKLURAN DISSIDENT LABOR GROUP (SEE REFTTEL) JUST ONE SEGMENT. THESE WERE "MAOIST-MINDED PEOPLE" TRYING TO FORM COALITION OF RADICAL CHURCH ELEMENTS,  
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BUKLURAN, STUDENTS, SQUATTERS, "AND OTHER DISADVANTAGED

ELEMENTS". MARXIST INFLUENCE ON THIS "MILITANT COALITION" WAS "PREPONDERANT", THOUGH SOMEWHAT "DILUTED BY RELIGIOUS PARTICIPATION". LEADERSHIP APPEARED TO BE CENTERED AT UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES (UP) AMONG MAOIST STUDENT GROUPS, ACCORDING OPLE.

2. LABOR SECRETARY NOTED COALITION TAKING "DETERMINED STEPS" PROMOTE JANUARY 25 DEMONSTRATION, WHICH APPARENTLY WOULD ONLY BE "SOMEWHAT SIMILAR" TO EARLIER DECEMBER 6 RALLY (PROTESTING P.D. 823 LABOR DECREE) WHICH HAD COINCIDED WITH PRESIDENT FORD'S VISIT (MANILA 17133). THIS TIME, HE NOTED, ORGANIZERS WERE ATTEMPTING LIK PROPOSED RALLY TO HISTORICAL EVENTS -- SPECIFICALLY, TO SO-CALLED "SIEGE OF MALACANANG" AND "BATTLE OF MENDIOLA BRIDGE" (CLOSE TO PRESIDENTIAL PALACE) WHICH OCCURRED BEFORE MARTIAL LAW TIMES ON JANUARY 30, 1971. THAT RIOT BY MAOIST YOUTH AND WORKER FACTIONS RESULTED IN DEATH OF FOUR STUDENTS AS MILITARY AND POLICE DROVE RIOTERS FROM MALACANANG AREA BACK TO MENDIOLA BRIDGE.

3. WHEN ASKED HOW MILITARY MIGHT REACT TO ANY SIZEABLE DEMONSTRATION ON JANUARY 25, OPLE RESPONDED THAT MILITARY WERE GETTING "IMPATIENT" WITH ACTIVITIES SOME OF THESE RADICAL GROUPS. LABOR SECRETARY WENT ON TO CONFIDE THAT "WE HAVE BEEN TRYING TO RESTRAIN THE MILITARY -- AND SO HAS PRESIDENT", BUT WE JUST DON'T KNOW HOW THEY (THE MILITARY) MIGHT REACT TO A STRONG PROVOCATION. "WE JUST HOPE THEY DON'T OVERREACT", OPLE ADDED.

4. JOHNNY TAN (PRESIDENT, FFW), WHOSE TRADE UNION HAS TRADITIONALLY HAD CLOSE ATTACHMENT TO LIBERAL CATHOLIC ELEMENTS (ESPECIALLY JESUIT), TOLD LABATT JANUARY 22 HE TOO HAD HEARD OF PLANS FOR SOME KIND DEMONSTRATION JANUARY 25. HE NOTED THAT BUKLURAN HAD ATTRACTED NUMBER OF OPPOSITION LABOR ELEMENTS, INCLUDING SOME PRIESTS AND NUNS WHO HAD BEEN ACTIVE IN GELMART (TEXTILES) UNION CERTIFICATION ELECTION LAST YEAR (SEE PART IV, MANILA A-295). HE ALSO MENTIONED INVOLVEMENT OPPOSITION LEADER SENATOR BOKNO. TAN ADMITTED "SOME OF MY BOYS" ON THEIR OWN HAD BEEN ATTENDING SEVERAL BUKLURAN MEETINGS AT ATENEO UNIVERSITY. CONFIDENTIAL

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SITY (JESUIT). IMPLICATION WAS THAT FFW DID NOT OFFICIALLY CONDONE SUCH PARTICIPATION IN BUKLURAN-SPONSORED ACTIVITIES. FINALLY, THE MAVERICK LABOR LEADER (WHO HAS KEPT HIMSELF OUT OF UNIFIED TUCIP) COMMENTED THAT SHOULD DEMONSTRATION COME OFF AND SHOULD THERE BE ANY TROUBLE, IT WOULD BE WORKERS AND STUDENTS WHO GOT IT IN THE NECK BECAUSE "PRIESTS AND NUNS ARE NOT BEING ARRESTED THESE DAYS" AS GOP HANDLED ANYTHING INVOLVING CHURCH ELEMENTS "WITH KID GLOVES".

5. COMMENT: EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED REPORTS ALLEGING BUKLURAN GROUP CREATURE OF COMMUNIST PARTY OF PHILIPPINES/MARIXT-LENINIST (CPP/ML). COMMUNIST INVOLVEMENT WOULD APPEAR BE CONFIRMED BY OPLE REMARKS, ALTHOUGH HE WAS LESS THAN PRECISE IN INTERMIXING MAOIST AND MARXIST LABELS. FROM OTHER TRADE UNION SOURCES, EMBASSY HAS LEARNED THAT AS EARLY AS LAST WEEK OPLE BRIEFED SELECTED TUCP LABOR LEADERS ON "BUKLURAN THREAT" TO ORGANIZED LABOR, PRESUMABLY USING INTELLIGENCE MATERIAL SUPPLIED BY MILITARY AUTHORITIES. GOP PITHC WAS THAT COMMUNIST COLLABORATION WITH RADICAL LABOR-ORIENTED CHURCH GROUPS WAS NOT PECULIAR TO PHILIPPINES, BUT INTERNATIONAL IN SCOPE, WITNESS CURRENT LABOR UNREST IN SPAIN. TUCP PRESIDENT ROBERTO OCA, SUGGESTING THAT GOP NOT TAKING POSSIBLE PROTEST RALLY JANUARY 25 LIGHTLY, INFORMED EMBASSY THAT CABINET MEETING JANUARY 20 HAD (ACCORDING TO OPLE) BEEN SCHEDULED DISCUSS MATTER.

6. WHETHER OR NOT DEMONSTRATION COMES OFF JANUARY 25, DOES APPEAR THAT COMMUNIST ELEMENTS HAVE INDEED SUCCEEDED IN ENTICING NON-COMMUNIST LABOR AND CHURCH GROUPS INTO "UNITY OF ACTION" STANCE ON LABOR GRIEVANCES. GIVEN DECLINE IN REAL WAGES AND SUSPICION THAT AMENDED P.D. 823 STILL PLACES SEVERE RESTRICTIONS ON LABOR'S RIGHT TO STRIKE (I.E. YOU CAN STRIKE IF GOVERNMENT LETS YOU), SUCH COOPERATION PERHAPS UNDERSTANDABLE. EVEN THE RESPECTED GOP CRITIC, RETIRED SUPREME COURT JUSTICE J.B.L. REYES, HAS LASHED OUT AT P.D. 823 (INCLUDING AMENDED VERSION) AND ADVOCATED PROTEST ACTION. SPEAKING BEFORE AND OPPOSITION-ORIENTED GROUP JANUARY 21, REYES REFERRED TO RECENT ILLEGAL STRIKES AS REPRESENTING "FUNDAMENTAL UNHAPPINESS OF LABOR". DESPITE EVER-PRESENT "THREAT OF ARREST AND

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MILITARY TRIAL", HE DECLARED "IT IS UP TO US TO KEEP UP PROTEST -- TO GIVE AID AND COMFORT TO LABOR -- TO FIGHT FOR JUSTICE FOR LABOR." JANUARY 25 COULD WELL BE REGARDED AS APPROPRIATE OCCASION FOR SUCH A PROTEST ACTION.

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## Message Attributes

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